

and other improvements in the vicinity of the proposed treatment. U.S. Census 1990 Block Data processed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection provides a statewide GIS layer of census blocks with associated attributes, including density of structures. Los Angeles County used these data for their fire hazard analysis (Figure 3-17). Mapping regional housing density from the 1990 Census block data according to density classes developed for the Malibu General Plan (1995) produced a map of relative housing density. Combining these data with the previous analysis of opportunities for strategic fuel modification projects shows where opportunities for successful fuel modification projects are also close to high densities of structures at risk (Figure 3-21).

Proximity to high-density population areas cannot be used alone to judge the appropriateness of a strategic fuels treatment proposal. The ability to provide tactical options to firefighting resources is one of the key elements of many fuels treatments. When strategically located, fuels treatments can provide anchor points for ground based firefighters and increase the effectiveness of fire retardant and water delivered by air tankers and helicopters. The reduction in biomass on treated areas creates lower fireline intensities and improved production rates for firefighters. These factors combine to decrease the resistance to control on wildfires burning under all but the most extreme weather conditions. It is for these reasons that proximity of dense population centers will be used as tertiary screening tool when evaluating fuels treatment proposals.

Figure 3-18 GIS-based Model for Characterizing Opportunities for Strategic Fuel Modification Projects in the Santa Monica Mountains

